

Death a Continuation of Life.

A
SERMON
PREACHED
AT THE
NEW JERUSALEM TEMPLE,
IN RED-CROSS-STREET,
NEAR CRIPPLEGATE, LONDON,
On JOHN XI. 23.

THY BROTHER SHALL RISE AGAIN.

BY MANOAH SIBLY, N.H.S.
AND SERVANT OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.



PRINTED BY R. HINDMARSH,
PRINTER TO HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS THE PRINCE OF WALES,
OLD-BAILEY.

And Sold by the AUTHOR, No. 35, Goswell-street; at the
Temple, Red-Cross-street; and by all Booksellers
in Town and Country.

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SERMON XII.

DEATH A CONTINUATION OF LIFE.

JOHN XI. 23.

Thy brother shall rise again.

THE general idea of the resurrection has hitherto been, that the body which man lays down at death, at some future period, when the world and all things therein shall be burnt up, will be miraculously raised by omnipotent power, and again re-united with the soul from which it had fled, when man once more becomes a living form and substance, capable of enjoying endless bliss, or feeling endless torment.

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With this, some have been of opinion, that the soul sleeps with the body till that last day, or remains in a state of insensibility; others, that the departed spirit goes to it's place of destination immediately at death, and at this period the good spirit comes out of heaven, and the evil out of hell, in order to meet their respective bodies, with which they re-unite and take them with their spirits to the place from whence they came, whereby the good are more capable of receiving celestial delights, and the wicked infernal woe. Again, others have supposed that the spirit, until this time arrives for re-union with it's material body, is kept in some separate temporary state of abode, either hovering about in the air, or transferred to some other globe or planet, from whence also some have accounted for the appearance of apparitions.

The reason why men have thus run into such absurd ideas, appears in a great measure to be from the state of the revelation of life and immortality, as opened in the gospel. In the Jewish dispensation we hardly find any

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traces of a life after death at all : and in the first christian dispensation, it was opened as to the general, namely, that men did actually live a life after death, according to the deeds done in the body, for ever in heaven or hell ; but the particular circumstances, the Lord for wise reasons kept reserved until he should make his second advent, wherein he has unfolded the laws, the nature, and state of the life of man in the spiritual world ; so that now the mind may be informed even as to the very particulars of his existence after death, the substance of which the New Jerusalem church has expressed thus in her creed : "I believe that immediately on the death of the material body (which will never be re-assumed), man rises again as to his spiritual and substantial body in the spiritual world, wherein he existeth a perfect human form, and thus that death is only a continuation of life." For the adoption of which creed, we are abundantly supported by reason as well as by the Word of God.

That on the death of the material body, which will never be re-assumed, man rises again

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again as to his spiritual or substantial body; reason proves, in the first place, from the circumstance of all natural things never being at a stay; no sooner is the corruption of one thing brought to pass, but that very corrupted matter is made the generation of another; and the material body of every man is ever passing off, and ever renewing itself, so that in a few years no man has the same particles of flesh and blood composing his body, as he had a few years back. Reason also teaches, that the material body returns to it's mother elements from whence it originated, and from thence it enters into and becomes part of another body, perhaps of a human creature, and perhaps not; it may be a beastly animal, a fowl, or a fish; or it may be some herb or mineral: and thus in a thousand years, after we have laid down our bodies, they may be so dispersed, as to have entered into the composition of ten thousand others; and if only some part goes to the formation of the material body of another man, how can each, at the supposed general resurrection, have it's own identical body? Wherefore, to suppose that the material body can
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ever rise from the dead at some future period, in order to be again re-united to the soul, man must wholly cast his reason aside, which is a talent given him to discern between what is rational and what is not,

Reason also teaches, when enlightened, that the natural world and the spiritual are two distinct worlds, each under the dominion of it's own sun ; that the sun of the spiritual world, because it is the nearest proceeding sphere from the Lord, is pure love ; therefore all it's flowing beams are life ; and the sun of the natural world is pure fire, and therefore all it's flowing beams are death ; that the union of these worlds is by correspondence, the flowing rays of life from the spiritual sun entering into the otherwise destructive rays of the natural sun. Which also is the origin of spirit and matter, spirit being able to enter into matter, but not matter into spirit ; because that would be the same as the camel going through the eye of a needle. What is superior and more pure, may enter into that which is inferior and more gross, but not *vice versa*, because it would be against all

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all divine order. Influx descends, but never ascends. Man, by obeying the call of the influx of life, may himself ascend ; but there is no influx from the inferior into the superior; no influx from the natural world into the spiritual, but all from the spiritual world into the natural. This being the nature of the spiritual and natural world, it's sun and influx, and man's body being allowedly, and beyond all contradiction, under the influence of the natural sun ; and his spiritual man, including all his soul, his mind, affections, thoughts, power of speech, operation, and senses, being under the influence of the spiritual sun ; how plain to see by enlightened reason, that divine order forbids that the material carcase of flesh and blood should ever ascend to the spiritual world ! From this opening view of the case, how plain does reason speak, that the spirit of man, agreeable to the laws of both worlds, can enter into the material world, whilst clothed with a material body, as this which is more pure can enter into that which is more gross ; but the material body cannot enter into the spiritual, because that would be counteracting all the laws

laws of divine order, by which the Lord has ever regulated all his operations.

Moreover, reason teaches, if it is but somewhat elevated above the sensual sphere, that the material carcase would be a useless load, a heavy incumbrance in that world where all things are spiritual, where thought brings persons and things present, and affections immediately conjoin. It is true, the material body is necessary for our existence in a world where all outward things are material. Here we want material hands to perform the duties which Providence has allotted us, to procure ourselves food, and provide our raiment, as also to do the functions of civil, moral, and a religious life; but in the spiritual world, whither we are all hastening, instead of these natural duties, we have corresponding spiritual ones, all the food and raiment there being from the desires of the mind, and the delights of the soul. Here also we want material feet to convey our bodies from place to place; but there thoughts bring near, and absence of thought separates, which even we may be convinced

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of from recurring to our own mind, where we can traverse the globe in an instant of time; we no sooner think of a place, but our mind is there, and thither we should be, were it not for the obstructing material load of flesh and blood. That we do not want the natural and material eye to discern spiritual objects, the natural ear to hear spiritual sounds, the natural sense of touch to enjoy spiritual feeling, the natural tongue to enjoy the relish of spiritual food, nor the natural nostrils toavour divine things, must be evident to every enlightened mind. That all these material organs are only adapted to uses in this world, together with the whole material frame, is further evidenced from every man in the universe laying it down at death, as having done the man all the service it can, and as being of no use in the world to which he is taking his everlasting flight. With regard to the supposition of two exceptions to this, in the case of Moses and Elijah, the spiritual sense opens these passages quite upon another ground to what they have been hitherto taken; and also the natural meaning the words themselves convey, will not bear out

out the idea that they took their material bodies into the spiritual world with them, without dying : the apostle also positively tells us, that it is appointed for all men once to die, and death has passed upon all men.

We might also instance in the case of food being wisely accommodated to the state of life man is in, whether natural or spiritual, material food for the sustenance of the material body, and spiritual for the spiritual body ; and inasmuch as we cannot live without a constant supply of both these foods whilst in the material world, he has commanded us when we pray to say, “ Give us this day our daily bread.” But that material bread and water is not to be had where all things are spiritual, must be evident to every thinking mind ; but instead thereof, spiritual food and drinks, according to the genius of the spiritual body. Hence we are told of those in heaven, that they hunger no more, nor thirst any more, but the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne feeds them, and leads them to living fountains of water, and God

himself shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

Thus far from the testimony of enlightened reason, we may safely conclude, that when man once has put off his material body by death, he will never more re-assume it. We will apply ourselves for confirmation to the Word itself, where we shall see men actually existing without the aid of the material body. Hence we may remember, that our Lord told the thief on the cross, *This day shalt thou be with me in paradise*; and also asserted to the Jews, that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were then living, in saying, Matt. xxii. 32, *I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; God is not the God of the dead, but of the living*. Moreover, at his transfiguration we find Moses and Elias both conversing with our Lord; also we may remember, the man-angel, whom John discoursed with in the Revelation, when John attempted to fall down and worship him, says to him, Rev. xxii. 9, *See thou do it not, I am thy fellow-servant,*
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and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus.

That the material body will never rise more, when once laid down, we may learn from the curse pronounced upon Adam's transgression, Gen. iii. 19, *In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat thy bread, till thou return unto the ground from whence thou wast taken; for dust thou art, and to dust shalt thou return.* Here is positive testimony that the body is to return to the ground and the dust; and instead of hereafter finding any proof that at a future period the scattered dust will become re-animated, and ascend with the soul into heaven, David tells us, Psalm xvii. 15, *I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.*

If complete satisfaction takes place after death, why should the spirit be supposed to want the aid of the material body to add to the fulness of it's felicity, as is the case with those who vote for the resurrection of the material body, as if before, the soul of man can enjoy but a partial delight. But we may remember,

remember, that without this body we may see Lazarus sitting in Abraham's bosom, and without this body we may see the rich man in hell lifting up his eyes. The material body adds nothing to the perfection of man in the least, unless as accommodated to uses in the natural world, entirely operated upon by the spiritual man from within, as to every member, organ, and sense; else the eyes would not see, the touch feel, the tongue speak, the nostrils smell, the ears hear, the feet walk, or the hands perform any functions, and which they do not in any the least degree after the spirit has left his material body. But still we must not conceive that any annihilation takes place as to any of it's senses, powers, or faculties—none in the least; the man in every respect is as much a man after death as before; he has lost nothing but the material load, which at all times was an emblem of death, and brought it into his recollection: he now begins truly and properly to live, because he enters upon a state immortal to him, and consequently eternal; therefore more a man than he was before, capable of exercising and enjoying
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the use of his members, senses, powers, and faculties, in a more exalted degree than he could whilst encumbered with a material body, surrounded by material and fading things. Paul, we may remember, in the fore-cited 13th chapter of the first of Corinthians, when reasoning of these things, uses almost the same language; he says, ver. 44, *There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body;* and then adds, as if addressing those who believe the material body will rise again, ver. 36, *Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die; and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain; but God giveth it a body as it has pleased him, and to every seed his own body.* Let us apply here what we observed before, of the distinction between the spiritual and natural worlds, to the spirit of man of spiritual seed, and the material body of man of natural seed, formed as receptive vessels of the spiritual man; and we must conclude, that Paul had no idea at all of the resurrection of the material body, for he says, "Thou fool, thou sowest not

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not that body that shall be," speaking of the natural body laid in the dust at death, because that, like the grain you sow, becomes the habitable body for the spirit no more; but still the man does not want for a body suited to the world into which he has entered; to every seed God giveth it's own body, that is, man lays down his natural body, and rises in the spiritual world in a spiritual body, from spiritual seed; therefore he afterwards says, in the 41st verse, *Howbeit that was first which is natural, and afterwards that which is spiritual.* And then, in ver. 50, lest any one should after all misunderstand his chain of reasoning, he concludes with the before-cited words, *Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.* If this is the case, and the apostle here asserts that which is truth, who ever afterwards will contend that the material body of flesh and bones is to rise at some future day, in order to be reanimated with the soul departed to the spiritual world? Who would not rather conclude that man, when he dies, rises up perfectly, and to all intents and purposes

poses a man? and finally, when he enters into the fulness of his love's delight, both internally and externally the judgment takes place upon him, and he is allotted to hell, or elevated to heaven, where he continues to all eternity, according to the bias of his life's love, which he procured to himself whilst he was in the world.

That man, when thus risen after death, is in a perfect human form, may likewise be abundantly proved from the Word; a confirming one indeed we have in the before-cited passage of the Revelation, where the angel, whom John went to worship, told him, he was one of his fellow servants, that kept the testimony of God, consequently one that had departed from the material world, and still existed as a man. We might also mention the many thousand men and women whom John saw sealed of the tribe of Judah. We might also prove it from the name being given indiscriminately to the inhabitants above, being called both men and angels, as was the case with the three who appeared to Abraham, the two who appeared to Lot;

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and with respect to the two angels who appeared at our Lord's sepulchre being called two young men in Luke's gospel, and two angels in John's; and, indeed, which also proves another doctrine of the New Church, namely, that angels were once men of some earth, as well as that the inhabitants of the other life still wear the appearance and the form of men, and therefore those who have seen them, called them so without any hesitation.

That man immediately after death rises in a complete human form in the spiritual world, may be also proved from what our Lord said in the parable of Dives and Lazarus, that as soon as they were dead, Dives lift up his eyes, being in torments, and Lazarus was safely lodged in Abraham's bosom; and he also said to the thief on the cross, *THIS DAY shalt thou be with me in paradise;* and Paul also, when writing under the influence of the same truth, says of the death of the faithful, that it is no other transition than being absent from the body, and present with the Lord.

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This brings us now to the concluding proposition of this article of faith, as laid down by the New Church in her creed, "Thus that death is only a continuation of life."

Here it may be necessary to consider what life is in its origin. In its origin we behold it seated in the Deity alone, flowing from him to all creatures in heaven, earth, and hell; all receive life from one fountain, the interior part of the creation being more immediately accommodated to the reception of that life than the exterior, the exterior receiving it through the medium of the interior; and that there may be one grand chain, uniting all the links from the highest to the lowest, the Lord himself became the lowest or last in the human, as he is the first or supreme head to all in the divine.

This order of life may be thus illustrated, in respect to the three heavens and the earth as conjoined. In the highest or third heaven are the immediate receivers of life from the Lord, and therefore it is called the celestial heaven, the inhabitants being in celestial

love, which is a love into the Lord. In the second heaven they form a more exterior circle, or if you please, are not so high ; they equally receive life from the Lord, but it is through the medium of the supreme or most interior heaven, as the case may be easily apprehended, by viewing the Lord as the heavenly sun to be the center of life, the third heaven the first circle where that life is perceived, the second heaven the next ; but where the same life is respectively obscured, in consequence of not flowing to them immediately from the Lord, but through the supreme heaven, whence to them the light of the sun becomes as the light of the moon, because they are only principled in spiritual love, a love to their neighbour as themselves. From these the source of life descends to the ultimate or first heaven, which is called the celestial and spiritual-natural heaven, and is in a more obscure state of love than the former, their love to the Lord and their neighbour being manifested in an affection for the goods and truths of faith.

Through these heavens from the Lord, the
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spring of life descends or extends itself to the world of spirits, and from them to men upon earth. It is thus that heaven holds communication with the earth, and the earth with the heavens, and also with the hells, for the hells receive the Lord's life in the same degrees as the heavens, but they pervert it in it's reception. Nothing passes upon earth but what has it's cause in the spiritual world ; if it is a good action, it has it's higher cause in heaven ; but if it is an evil action, it has it's deeper cause in hell. Hence by actions done in the body, according to the life's love, man becomes conjoined to heaven or hell.

These ideas prove what was before observed, that what is interior may subsist without what is exterior, because it depends entirely upon the interior for it's existence and subsistence ; and this gives to see the real cause of natural death, the material body no longer permitting the influx of life to flow into it from the spirit ; this will also prove that the man can live as well without it, only he lives a more interior life than before.

All the Lord's works correspond. The will of man, into which the Lord immediately flows with life, answers to the third heaven of celestial angels, and from that will he flows into the understanding, which answers to the second heaven, and from the will and understanding into the affections and thoughts; for the human mind possesses three degrees, answering to the three heavens, the material body serving only as a basis and a containing vessel for his spiritual man, and which is given that he may therein make up his spiritual form either an image or likeness of heaven or hell, but which spiritual life and form can exist without it as perfect a man as before, yea more perfect, because it is rid of its chief incumbrance. Thus when the material body is laid aside by death, the death of the material body becomes really and truly, notwithstanding the appearance in this world, only the continuation of life; yea, of that life which existed before in the material body; for the life was in no part of the material body, but wholly and solely in the spirit, and it all rises with the spirit in the spiritual world; when, if we have

have contracted any appearances whilst in the life of the material body, contrary to the true spirit of our life, we shall there sooner or later put them off, for then these words of our Lord are fully verified, "There is nothing hid that shall not be revealed, and nothing secret that shall not be made known." If the spirit of our life is principled in love to the Lord and to our neighbour, we shall become fit inhabitants for either the third, second, or lowest heaven; for in heaven are many mansions, prepared according to the life and state of the inhabitants.

But if, on the other hand, when we leave this world, the spirit of our life is principled in what is evil and false, that is, in the love of self and the world, we shall then become fit inhabitants for one or other of the doleful regions beneath, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched..

Seeing these things are so, and the life of the body is given us as a state of probation, what manner of persons ought we to be in all manner of holy conversation and godliness!

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ness ! How ought we with watchfulness and prayer to improve the time allotted us in the life of the body, for thereon depends our everlasting condition, everlasting joy in heaven, or endless sorrow in hell. Let us not think that to get rid of our evil loves we must depart this life ; now is the time or never, for death is only a continuation of the same state of life with which we leave the world. Whatever was our delight here that we die principled in, will be our delight for ever. Do we, for instance, indulge ourselves in hatreds, self-love, or any other evil ? We shall do the same after we have left the body, unless, whilst we may, we break off our sins by repentance ; those sins do not belong to the material body, for that is only a servant to the spirit, and it will either serve God or the devil, just as the internal man dictates and commands.

How should these observations also rouse hardened sinners to a sense of their folly ! Are any supposing that a future period is time enough to think of the things of an eternal world, putting it off till death stares them

them in the face? Let them remember, that the life of the body (and how long or short that may be, is wholly unknown) is given for no other purpose than that they might initiate themselves into the things of another. For this end, the Lord is momentarily knocking at the door of every heart, desiring admittance; he is ever waiting to be gracious, and will favour every good and holy resolution made with a dependence upon him for strength and salvation.

Now to our Lord Jesus Christ be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

shown in the body. If the system becomes perverted, it will give birth to the body (sin) now long or short, never weary, as well as malignant, as giving birth to other bodies than this might interfere with the body, into the body of another. For this cause the Lord is continually propounding to the door of earthly misery, deliverance; he is ever willing to be received, and will receive every soul that comes, and will always carry good things, to his judgment, will judge with a judgment upon him for his wrongs.

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Now to our Lord Jesus Christ be glory and honor to all ever and ever. Amen.

